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TENNYSON

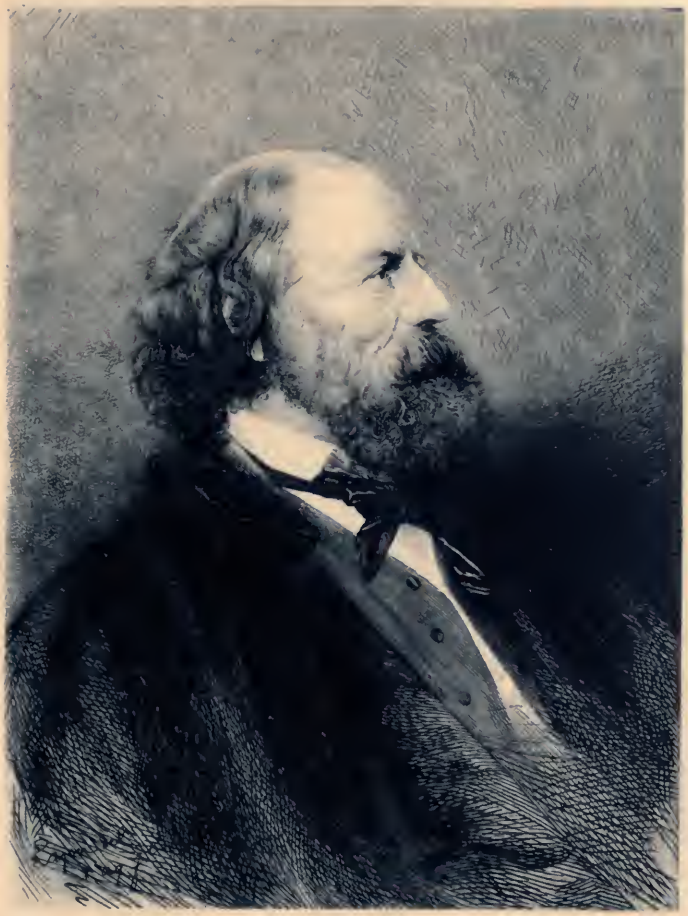
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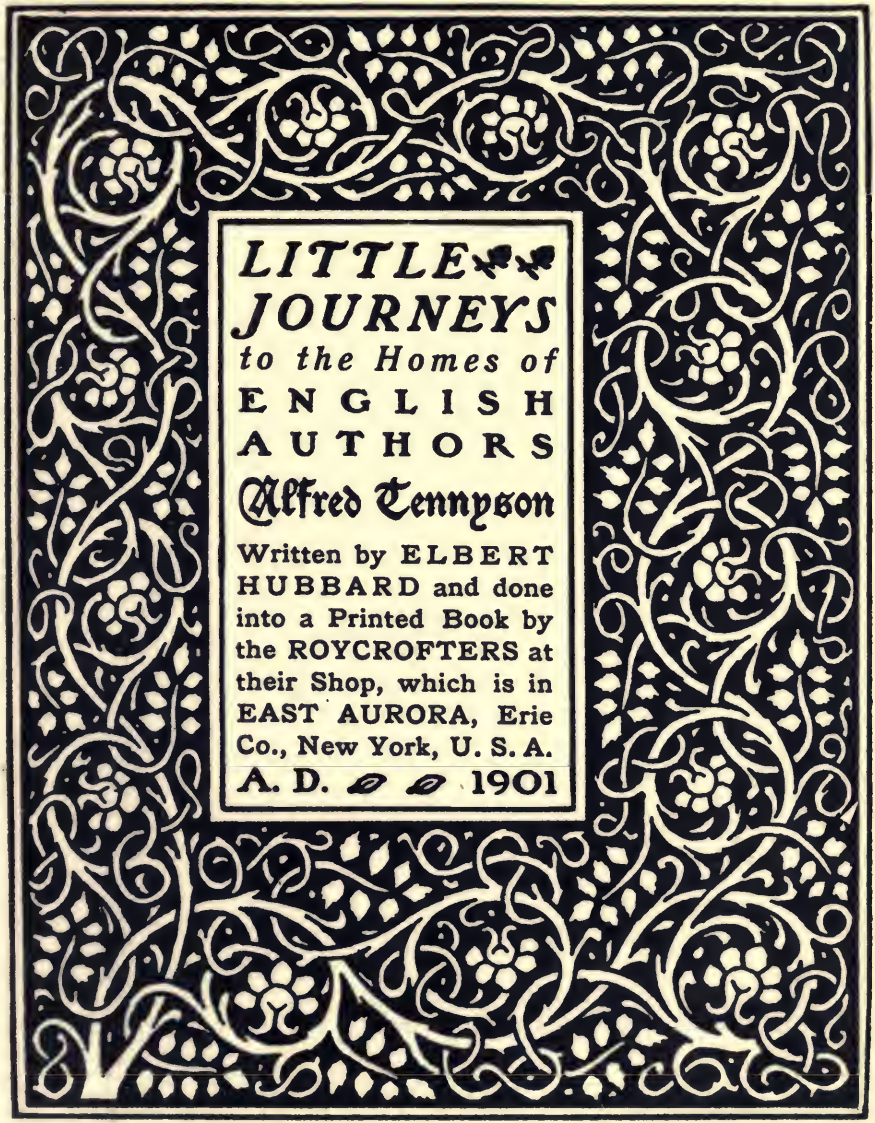
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Tennyson

From the etching by Rajon


LITTLE JOURNEYS
to the Homes of
ENGLISH
AUTHORS
Alfred Tennyson
Written by ELBERT HUBBARD and done into a Printed Book by the ROYCROFTERS at their Shop, which is in EAST AURORA, Erie Co., New York, U. S. A.
A. D. 1901

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Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Nor of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam.

—Merlin.

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HE grandfather of Tennyson had two sons, the elder boy, according to Mr. Clement Scott, being "both willful and commonplace." Now, of course, the property and honors and titles, according to the Law of England, would all gravitate to the commonplace boy; and the second son, who was competent, dutiful and worthy, would be out in the cold world—simply because he was accidentally born second and not first. It was not his fault that he was born second, and it was in no wise to the credit of the other that he was born first.

So the father, seeing that the elder boy had small executive capacity, and no appreciation of a Good Thing, disinherited him, giving him, however, a generous allowance, but letting the titles go to the second boy, who was bright and brave and withal a right manly fellow. ☙ Personally I 'm glad the honors went to the best man. But Hallam Tennyson, son of the Poet, sees only rank injustice in the action of his ancestor who deliberately set his own opinion of right and justice against precedent as embodied in English Law ☙ As a matter of strictest justice, we might argue that neither

boy was entitled to anything which he had not earned, and that, in dividing the property between them, instead of allowing it all to drift into the hands of the one accidentally born first, the father acted wisely and well. But neither Alfred nor Hallam Tennyson thought so. How much their opinions were biased by the fact that they were descendants of the first-born son, we cannot say. Anyway, the descendants of the second son, Hon. Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt, have made no protest, of which I can learn, about justice having been defeated.

Considering this subject of the Law of Entail one step further, we find that Hallam, the present Lord Tennyson, is a Peer of the Realm simply because his father was a great poet, and honors were given him on that account by the Queen. These honors go to Hallam, who as all men agree, is in many ways singularly like his grandfather.

Genius is not hereditary, but titles are. Hallam is eminently pleased with the English Law of Entail, save that he questions whether any father has the divine right to divert his titles and wealth from the eldest son. Lord Hallam's arguments are earnest and well expressed, but they seem to show that he is lacking in what Herbert Spencer calls the "value sense"—in other words, the sense of humor.

Hallam's lack of perspective is further demonstrated by his patient efforts to explain who the various Tennysons were. In my boyhood days I thought there

was but one Tennyson. On reading Hallam's book, however, one would think there were dozens of them. To keep these various men, bearing one name, from being confused in the mind of the reader, is quite a task; and to better identify one particular Tennyson, Hallam always refers to him as "Father," or "My Father." In the course of a recent interview with Mr. W. H. Seward, of Auburn, N. Y., I was impressed by his dignified, respectful and affectionate references to "Seward." "This belonged to Seward," & "Seward told me,"—as though there were but one. In these pages I will speak of Tennyson—there has been but one—there will never be another.



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THINK Mr. Clement Scott is a little severe in his estimate of the character of Tennyson's father, although the main facts are doubtless as he states them. The Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, Rector of Somersby and Wood Enderby parishes, was a typical English parson. As a boy he was simply big, fat and lazy. His health was so perfect that it overtopped all ambition, and having no nerves to speak of, his sensibilities were very slight. ☙ When he was disinherited, in favor of his younger brother, a keen, nervous, forceful fellow, he accepted it as a matter of course. His career was planned for him: he "took orders," married the young woman his folks selected, and slipped easily into his proper niche —his adipose serving as a buffer for his feelings. In his intellect there was no flash, and his insight into the heart of things was small.

Being happily married to a discreet woman who managed him without ever letting him be aware of it, and having a sure and sufficient income, and never knowing that he had a stomach, he did his clerical work, (with the help of a curate) and lived out the measure of his days, no wiser at the last than he was at thirty. ☙ In passing, we may call attention to the fact that the average man is a victim of Arrested Development, and that the fleeting years bring an increase of knowl-

edge only in very exceptional cases. Health and prosperity are not pure blessings—a certain element of discontent is necessary to spur men on to a higher life.

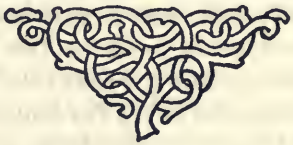
Rev. George Clayton Tennyson had income enough to meet his wants, but not enough to embarrass him with the responsibility of taking care of it. Each quarterly stipend was spent before it arrived, and the family lived on credit until another three months rolled around. They had roast beef as often as they wanted it; in the cellar were puncheons, kegs and barrels, and as there was no rent to pay nor landlords to appease, care sat lightly on the Rector.

Elizabeth, this man's wife, is worthy of more than a passing note. She was the daughter of Rev. Stephen Fytche, vicar of Louth. Her family was not so high in rank as the Tennysons, because the Tennysons belonged to the gentry. But she was intelligent, amiable, fairly good-looking, and being the daughter of a clergyman, had beyond doubt a knowledge of clerical needs; so it was thought she would make a good wife for the newly appointed incumbent of Somersby.

The parents arranged it, the young folks were willing, and so they were married—and the bridegroom was happy ever afterward.

And why should n't he have been happy? Surely no man was ever blest with a better wife! He had made a reach into the matrimonial grab-bag and drawn forth a jewel. This jewel was many-faceted. Without affectation or silly pride, the clergyman's wife did the work that God

sent her to do. The sense of duty was strong upon her. Babies came, once each two years, and in one case two in one year, and there was careful planning required to make the income reach, & to keep the household in order. Then she visited the poor and sick of the parish, & received the many visitors. And with it all she found time to read. Her mind was open and alert for all good things. I am not sure that she was so very happy, but no complaints escaped her. In all she bore twelve children, eight sons & four daughters. Ten of these children lived to be over seventy-five years of age. The fourth child that came to her they named Alfred.



TENNYSON'S education in early youth was very slight. His father laid down rules and gave out lessons, but the strictness of discipline never lasted more than two days at a time. The children ran wild and roamed the woods of Lincolnshire in search of all the curious things that the woods hold in store for boys. The father occasionally made stern efforts to "correct" his sons. In use of the birch he was ambi-dextrous. But I have noticed that in households where a strap hangs behind the kitchen door, for ready use, it is not utilized so much for pure discipline as to ease the feelings of the parent. They say that expression is a need of the human heart; and I am also convinced that in many hearts there is a very strong desire at times to "thrash" someone. Who it is makes little difference, but children being helpless and the law giving us the right, we find gratification by falling upon them with straps, birch rods, slippers, ferules, hair brushes or apple tree sprouts.

No student of pedagogics now believes that the free use of the rod ever made a child "good"; but all agree that it has often served as a safety valve for a pent up emotion in the parent or teacher.

The father of Alfred Tennyson applied the birch, and the boy took to the woods, moody, resentful, solitary. There was good in this, for the lad learned to live

within himself, and to be self-sufficient: to love the solitude, and feel a kinship with all the life that makes the groves and fields melodious.

In 1828, when nineteen years of age, Alfred was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge. He remained there three years, but left without a degree, and what was worse —with the ill-will of his teachers, who seemed to regard his a hopeless case. He would n't study the books they wanted him to, and was never a candidate for academic distinctions.

College life, however, has much to recommend it beside the curriculum. At Cambridge, Tennyson made the acquaintanceship of a group of young men who influenced his life profoundly. Kemble, Milnes, Brookfield & Spedding remained his life-long friends; and as all good is reciprocal, no man can say how much these eminent men owe to the moody and melancholy Tennyson, or how much he owes to them.

TENNYSON began to write verse very young. His first line is said to have been written at five and he has told of going when thirteen years of age to visit his grandfather, and of presenting him a poem. The old gentleman gave him half a guinea with the remark, "This is the first money you ever made by writing poetry, and take my word for it, it will be the last!" When eighteen years of age, with his brother, Charles, he produced a thin book of thin verses.

We have the opinion of Coleridge to the effect that the only lines which have any merit in the book, are those signed C. T. Charles became a clergyman of marked ability, married rich, and changed his name from Tennyson to Turner for economic and domestic reasons. Years afterward, when Alfred had become Poet Laureate, rumor has it he thought of changing the "Turner" back to "Tennyson," but was unable to bring it about.

The only honor captured by Alfred at Cambridge was a prize for his poem, "Timbuctoo." The encouragement that this brought him, backed up by Arthur Hallam's declaiming the piece in public—as a sort of defi to detractors—caused him to fix his attention more assiduously on verse. He could write—it was the only thing he could do—and so he wrote.

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At Cambridge he was in the habit of reading his poetry to a little coterie called "The Apostles," and he always premised his reading with the statement that no criticism would be acceptable.

The year he was twenty-one he published a small book called "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical." The books went a-begging for many years; but times change, for a copy of this edition was sold by Quaritch in 1895 for one hundred and eighty pounds. The only piece in the book that seems to show genuine merit is "Mariana."

Two years afterward a second edition, revised and enlarged, was brought out. This book contains "The Lady of Shalott," "The May Queen," "A Dream of Fair Women" and "The Lotus Eaters."

Beyond a few fulsome reviews from personal friends and a little surly mention from the tribe of Jeffrey, the volume attracted no attention. This coldness on the part of the public shot an atrabiliar tint through the ambition of our poet, and the fond hope of a success in literature faded from his mind.

And then began what Stopford Brooke has called "the ten fallow years in the life of Tennyson." But fallow years are not all fallow. The dark brooding night is as necessary for our life as the garish day. Great crops of wheat that feed the nations grow only where the winter's snow covers all as with a garment. And ever behind the mystery of sleep, and beneath the silence of the snow, Nature slumbers not nor sleeps.

The withholding of quick recognition gave the mind of

Tennyson an opportunity to ripen. Fate held him in leash that he might be saved for a masterly work, and all the time that he lived in semi-solitude and read and thought and tramped the fields, his soul was growing strong and his spirit was taking on the silken self-sufficient strength that marked his later days ❧ This hiatus of ten years in the life of our poet is very similar to the thirteen fallow years in the career of Browning. These men crossed and re-crossed each other's pathway, but did not meet for many years. What a help they might have been to each other in those years of doubt and seeming defeat! But each was to make his way alone.

Browning seemed to grow through society and travel, but solitude served the needs of Tennyson.

"There must be a man behind every sentence," said Emerson. After ten years of silence, when Tennyson issued his book, the literary world recognized the man behind it. Tennyson had grown as a writer, but more as a man. And after all, it is more to be a man than a poet ❧ All who knew Tennyson, and have written of him, especially during those early years, begin with a description of his appearance. His looks did not belie the man. In intellect and in stature he was a giant. The tall, athletic form, the great shaggy head, the classic features and the look of untried strength, were all thrown into fine relief by the modesty, the half-embarrassment of his manner.

To meet the poet was to acknowledge his power. No

man can talk as wise as he can look, and Tennyson never tried to. His words were few and simple.

Those who met him went away ready to back his lightest word. They felt there was a man behind the sentence.

Carlyle, who was a hero-worshipper, but who usually limited his worship to those well dead and long gone hence, wrote of Tennyson to Emerson: "One of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of dusky hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking, clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will grow to."

And then again, writing to his brother John: "Some weeks ago, one night, the poet Tennyson and Matthew Arnold were discovered here sitting smoking in the garden. Tennyson had been here before, but was still new to Jane,—who was alone for the first hour or two of it. A fine large featured, dim-eyed, bronze-colored, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free-and-easy; who swims outwardly and inwardly, with great composure in an articulate element as of tranquil chaos and tobacco-smoke; great now and then when he does emerge; a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man."

The "English Idylls," put forth in 1842 contained all of the poems, heretofore published, that Tennyson cared to retain. It must be stated to the credit, or discredit, of America, that the only complete editions of Tennyson were issued by New York and Boston publishers ❧ These men seized upon the immature early poems of Tennyson, and combining them with his later books, issued the whole in a style that tried men's eyes—very proud of the fact that "this is the only complete edition," etc. Of course they paid the author no royalty, neither did they heed his protests, and possibly all this prepared the way for frosty receptions of daughters of quick machine-made American millionaires, who journeyed to the Isle of Wight in after days. Soon after the publication of "English Idylls," Alfred Tennyson moved gracefully, like a ship that is safely launched, into the first place among living poets. He was then thirty-three years of age, with just half a century, lacking a few months, yet to live. In all that half century, with its many conflicting literary judgments, his title to first place was never seriously questioned ❧ Up to 1842, in his various letters, and through his close friends, we learn that Tennyson was sore pressed for funds. He had n't money to buy books, and when he traveled it was through the munificence of some kind kinsman. He even excuses himself from attending certain social functions on account of his lack of suitable raiment—probably with a certain satisfaction.

But when he tells of his poverty to Emily Sellwood, the woman of his choice, there is anguish in his cry. In fact her parents succeeded in breaking off her relations with Tennyson for a time, on account of his very uncertain prospects. His brothers, even those younger than he, had slipped into snug positions—"but Alfred dreams on with nothing special in sight." ❧ Poetry, in way of a financial return, is not to be commended. Honors were coming Tennyson's way as early as 1842, but it was not until 1845, when a pension of two hundred pounds a year was granted him by the Government, that he began to feel easy. Even then there were various old scores to liquidate.

The year 1850, when he was forty-one, has been called his "golden year," for in it occurred the publication of "In Memoriam," his appointment to the post of Poet Laureate, and his marriage.

Emily Sellwood had waited for him all these years. She had been sought after, and had refused several good offers from eligible widowers and others who pitied her sad plight and looked upon her as an old maid forlorn. But she was true to her love for Alfred. ❧ Possibly she had not been courted quite so assiduously as Tennyson's mother had been. When that dear old lady was past eighty she became very deaf, and the family often ventured to carry on conversations in her presence which possibly would have been modified had the old lady been in full possession of her faculties. On a day as she sat knitting in the chimney

corner, one of her daughters in a burst of confidence to a visitor, said, "Why, before Mamma married Papa she had received twenty-three offers of marriage!" "Twenty-four, my dear,—twenty-four," corrected the old lady as she shifted the needles.

No one has ever claimed that Tennyson was an ideal lover. Surely he never could have been tempted to do what Browning did—break up the peace of a household by an elopement. His love was a thing of the head, weighed carefully in the scales of his judgment. His caution and good sense saved him from all Byronic excesses, or foolish alliances such as took Shelley captive. He believed in law and order, and early saw that his interests lay in that direction. He belonged to the Church of England, & doubtless thought as he pleased, but ever expressed himself with caution.

It is easy to accuse Tennyson of being insular—to say that he is merely "the poet of England." Had he been more he would have been less. World-poets have usually been revolutionists, and dangerous men who exploded at an unknown extent of concussion. None of them has been a safe man—none respectable. Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Hugo and Whitman were outcasts Tennyson is always serene, sane and safe—his lines breathe purity and excellence. He is the poet of religion, of the home and fireside, of established order, of truth, justice and mercy as embodied in law. Very early he became a close personal friend of Queen Victoria and many of his lines ministered to

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her personal consolation ✦ For fifty years Tennyson's life was one steady, triumphal march. He acquired wealth, such as no other English poet before him had ever gained; his name was known in every corner of the earth where white men journeyed, and at home he was beloved and honored. He died October 6th, 1892, aged eighty-three, and for him the Nation mourned, and with deep sincerity the Queen spoke of his demise as a poignant, personal sorrow.



IT was at Cambridge he met Arthur Hallam—Arthur Hallam, immortal and remembered alone for being the comrade and friend of Tennyson.

Alfred took his friend Arthur to his home in Lincolnshire one vacation, and we know how Arthur became enamored of Tennyson's sister Emily, and they were betrothed. Together, Tennyson and Hallam made a trip through France and the Pyrenees.

Carlyle and Milburn, the blind preacher, once sat smoking in the little arbor back of the house in Cheyne Row. They had been talking of Tennyson, and after a long silence Carlyle knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and with a grunt said, "Ha! Death is a great blessing—the joyousest blessing of all! Without death there would ha' been no 'In Memoriam,' no Hallam, and like enough no Tennyson!" It is futile to figure what would have occurred had this or that not happened, since every act of life is a sequence. But that Carlyle and many others believed that the death of Hallam was the making of Tennyson, there is no doubt. Possibly his soul needed just this particular amount of bruising in order to make it burst into undying song—who knows! When Charles Kingsley was asked for the secret of his exquisite sympathy and fine imagination, he paused a space, and then answered—

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"I had a friend." ❧ The desire for friendship is strong in every human heart. We crave the companionship of those who can understand. The nostalgia of life presses, we sigh for "home," and long for the presence of one who sympathizes with our aspirations, comprehends our hopes and is able to partake of our joys. A thought is not our own until we impart it to another, and the confessional seems a crying need of every human soul.

One can bear grief but it takes two to be glad.

We reach the Divine through some one, and by dividing our joy with this one we double it, and come in touch with the Universal. The sky is never so blue, the birds never sing so blithely, our acquaintances are never so gracious as when we are filled with love for some one.

Being in harmony with one we are in harmony with all. ❧ The lover idealizes and clothes the beloved with virtues that exist only in his imagination. The beloved is consciously or unconsciously aware of this, and endeavors to fulfill the high ideal; and in the contemplation of the transcendent qualities that his mind has created, the lover is raised to heights otherwise unattainable. ❧ Should the beloved pass from earth while this condition of exaltation endures, the conception is indelibly impressed upon the soul, just as the last earthly view is said to be photographed upon the retina of the dead. The highest earthly relationship is in its very essence, fleeting, for men are fallible, and living in a world

where material wants jostle, and time and change play their ceaseless parts, gradual obliteration comes and disillusion enters. But the memory of a sweet affinity once fully possessed, and snapped by fate at its supremest moment, can never die from out the heart. All other troubles are swallowed up in this, and if the individual is of too stern a fiber to be completely crushed into the dust, time will come bearing healing, and the memory of that once ideal condition will chant in the heart a perpetual eucharist.

And I hope the world has passed forever from the nightmare of pity for the dead: they have ceased from their labors and are at rest.

But for the living, when death has entered and removed the best friend, fate has done her worst; the plummet has sounded the depths of grief, and thereafter nothing can inspire terror. At one fell stroke all petty annoyances and corroding cares are sunk into nothingness. The memory of a great love lives enshrined in undying amber. It affords a ballast 'gainst all the storms that blow, and although it lends an unutterable sadness, it imparts an unspeakable peace. Where there is this haunting memory of a great love lost, there are always forgiveness, charity and a sympathy that makes the man brother to all who suffer and endure. The individual himself is nothing: he has nothing to hope for, nothing to lose, nothing to win, and this constant memory of the high and exalted friendship that once was his is a nourishing source of

strength; it constantly purifies the mind and inspires the heart to nobler living and diviner thinking. The man is in communication with Elemental Conditions. To know an ideal friendship and to have it fade from your grasp and flee as a shadow before it is touched with the sordid breath of selfishness, or sullied by misunderstanding, is the highest good. And the constant dwelling in sweet, sad recollection on the exalted virtues of the one that has gone, tends to crystalize these very virtues in the heart of him who meditates them The beauty with which love adorns its object becomes at last the possession of the one who loves.

At the hour when the strong and helpful, yet tender and sympathetic friendship of Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Hallam was at its height, there came a brief and abrupt word from Vienna to the effect that Arthur was dead.

> In Vienna's fatal walls
> God's finger touched him and he slept!

The shock of surprise, followed by dumb, bitter grief, made an impression on the youthful mind of Tennyson that the sixty years which followed did not obliterate

At first a numbness and deadness came over his spirit, but this condition ere long gave way to a sweet contemplation of the beauties of character that his friend possessed, and he tenderly reviewed the gracious hours they had spent together.

"In Memoriam" is not one poem; it is made up of many "short swallow-flights of song that dip their wings in tears and skim away." There are one hundred and thirty separate songs in all, held together by the silken thread of love for the poet's lost friend. Seventeen years were required for their evolution. Some people, misled by the title, possibly, think of these poems as a wail of grief for the dead, a vain cry of sorrow for the lost, or a proud parading of mourning millinery. Such views could not be more wholly wrong. To every soul that has loved and lost, to those who have stood by open graves, to all who have beheld the sun go down on less worth in the world, these songs are a victor's cry. They tell of love and life that rise phoenix-like from the ashes of despair; of doubt turned to faith; of fear which has become serenest peace.

All poems that endure must have this helpful, uplifting quality. Without violence of direction they must be beacon lights that gently guide stricken men and women into safe harbors.

The "Invocation," written nearly a score of years after Hallam's death, reveals Tennyson's personal conquest of pain. His thought has broadened from the sense of loss into a stately march of conquest over death for the whole human race The sharpness of grief has wakened the soul to the contemplation of sublime ideas—truth, justice, nobility, honor, and the sense of beauty as shown in all created things. The man once loved a person—now his heart goes out to

the universe. The dread of death is gone, and he calmly contemplates his own end and waits the summons without either impatience or fear. He realizes that death itself is a manifestation of life—that it is as natural and just as necessary.

Sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me,
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea.

The desire for sympathy and the wish for friendship are in his heart, but the fever of unrest and the spirit of revolt are gone. His heart, his hope, his faith, his life, are freely laid on the altar of Eternal Love.



SO HERE ENDETH THE LITTLE JOURNEY TO THE HOME OF ALFRED TENNYSON, AS WRITTEN BY ELBERT HUBBARD, THE TITLE PAGE, INITIALS & ORNAMENTS BEING DESIGNED BY SAMUEL WARNER, AND THE WHOLE DONE INTO A BOOKLET BY THE ROYCROFTERS AT THEIR SHOP, WHICH IS IN EAST AURORA, IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER, IN THE YEAR MCMI.


Roycroft
Elbert Hubbard

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LITTLE
JOURNEYS

By
ELBERT
HUBBARD